OTHER HANDS

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Issue 5: April 1994

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Editorial: Round Two

As we begin the second year of *Other Hands'* existence, I thought that a "state of the union address" might be appropriate. As of April, our journal has a total of thirty-five subscriptions (two of them complementary, four exchange-based). Our readers range throughout the US and Europe: twenty-six in America, four in England, the others in Germany, Sweden, Spain, Austria, and the Netherlands.

Our financial situation (and that of our publishers) has evened out somewhat since last issue, leaving us less dependent on sheer numbers of subscribers to keep us afloat. Although we are regularly noted in the pages of *Estel* and *Beyond Bree,* it never ceases to amaze me that *Amon Hen* has managed to remain oblivious to our existence for more than a year now (especially given the fact that copies of *OH* were sent to its editor for review many moons ago). Tolkien specialty shops fear to stock us (with the partial exception of *Thornton's* of Oxford, who promised to notice us in their next Tolkien catalogue). But we laugh in the face of adversity.

Continuing on our campaign theme from last issue, Anders Blixt has offered us two articles that expand upon themes hinted at in his earlier article "Beyond the Third Age" (*OH* 1: 7-19). The first presents an outline for a Second Age campaign set in Middle-earth before the foundation of Gondor, while the second gives more in-depth background material for his Fourth Age "Aelindur" campaign.

Pete Clark, a newcomer to *Other Hands,* has given us permission to reprint a narrative background to another pre-Akallabêth campaign which he has been running with the Oxford Tolkien Society. Normally, we don't publish purely "literary" pieces, but perhaps this will tempt Pete to tell us more about the campaign in a future issue. We are also joined by Scott Stanek, who has sent in a "bio" of a very interesting character—interesting, because his story proves that it's possible to set an engaging Middle-earth game even in so remote a setting as Valinor in the First Age.

I haven't been able to contibute much to this issue because of my work with the *Kin-strife* module, but I did manage to write a short piece on the history of Umbar. No adventure scenario for this issue, because no one sent me any. Start writing if you want to continue to see stuff like that, and see you in three months!

Chris Seeman
April 1, 1994

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COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Chris,

Thank you very much for your kind gifts to the roleplaying game commission of the Sociedad Tolkien Española (STE). We have discussed the first two issues of *Other Hands,* and all agree that the journal will become the main discussion forum for Tolkienian role-players in coming years. I will be writing an article about *Other Hands* in *Estel* (our society bulletin) to inform all members of STE about subscription information. We are happy to see that we are not alone in our estimation of the *Middle-earth Role Playing* system—ICE's Middle-earth looks very different from that of *The Lord of the Rings.*

I believe that there are two main reasons why ICE's treatment of Tolkien's world does not differ substantively from other conventional fantasy settings: the treatment of races and magic. These topics will be the principal subject of our commission's activity, which will include:

1) a complete description of all races, with special attention devoted to the treatment of language and manners (both very important, we believe, since role-playing is an oral activity). Of course, races not invented by Tolkien himself will be omitted from our examination (ICE's Umli and Half-trolls, as well as Half-elves, since these do not properly constitute a "race").

2) conversion of the magic system. This is an enormous problem, in part because the members of our own commission are themselves divided. As for myself, I believe that the correct approach would run as follows: there are *only* five wizards (the Istari); Men and Hobbits are not a magical by race, so they cannot work magic (although they may *use* magic items they come across); Elves can use songs of power to create magical artefacts; Dwarves can use magic only to improve their own creations (e.g., the magic toys described in *The Hobbit* and *LotR*). But this is only my own interpretation of Tolkien (others on the commission defend other positions).

At present, we are discussing the Noldor (a lengthy process, as the members of our commission are spread over six different cities). We plan to celebrate our First National Convention in Pamplona in March, which should speed up our discussions. I am the mail-keeper for the Convention, so you can get more information about it from me, if you are interested.

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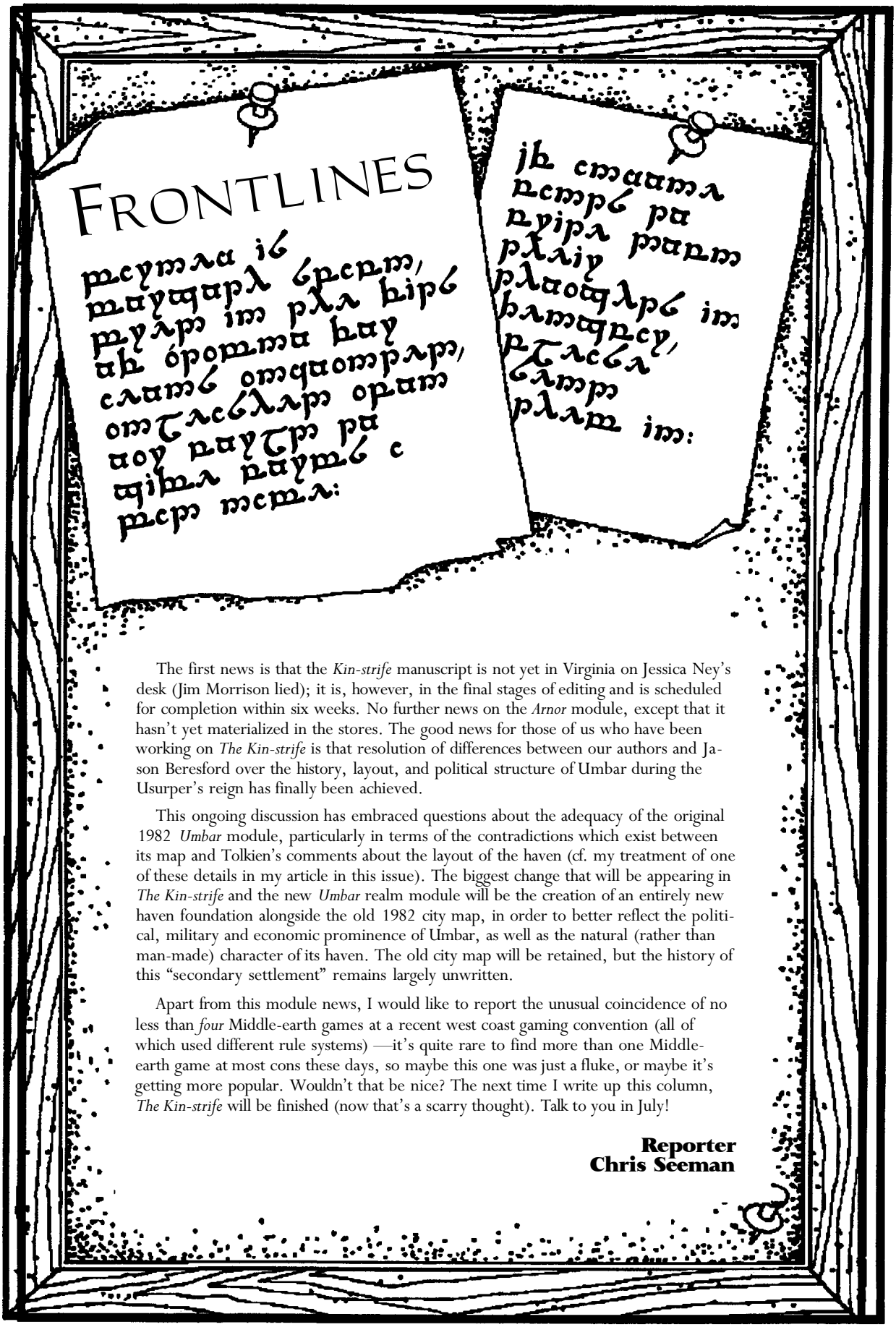
FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing community. Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Role Playing). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA—1 issue $3/4 issues $12; outside the USA—surface 1 issue $3.50/4 issues $14—air 1 issue $4.50/4 issues $18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948, USA. No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any form (preferably legible), but are easiest to edit when received on a floppy disk. Word for Windows is the editing software currently in use, so if there is any question as to the readability of your disk, please save your document in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submitted materials remain the copyright of the author unless we are otherwise informed. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 (USA). Please write me or call if you encounter any difficulties, my phone number is (415) 892-9066. Please note also that I may be reached over Internet: chrisl224@aol.com

FRONTLINES



The first news is that the *Kin-strife* manuscript is not yet in Virginia on Jessica Ney's desk (Jim Morrison lied); it is, however, in the final stages of editing and is scheduled for completion within six weeks. No further news on the *Arnor* module, except that it hasn't yet materialized in the stores. The good news for those of us who have been working on *The Kin-strife* is that resolution of differences between our authors and Jason Beresford over the history, layout, and political structure of Umbar during the Usurper's reign has finally been achieved.

This ongoing discussion has embraced questions about the adequacy of the original 1982 *Umbar* module, particularly in terms of the contradictions which exist between its map and Tolkien's comments about the layout of the haven (cf. my treatment of one of these details in my article in this issue). The biggest change that will be appearing in *The Kin-strife* and the new *Umbar* realm module will be the creation of an entirely new haven foundation alongside the old 1982 city map, in order to better reflect the political, military and economic prominence of Umbar, as well as the natural (rather than man-made) character of its haven. The old city map will be retained, but the history of this "secondary settlement" remains largely unwritten.

Apart from this module news, I would like to report the unusual coincidence of no less than *four* Middle-earth games at a recent west coast gaming convention (all of which used different rule systems) —it's quite rare to find more than one Middle-earth game at most cons these days, so maybe this one was just a fluke, or maybe it's getting more popular. Wouldn't that be nice? The next time I write up this column, *The Kin-strife* will be finished (now that's a scarry thought). Talk to you in July!

Reporter
Chris Seeman

Semper Fidelis: some ideas for a Second Age campaign

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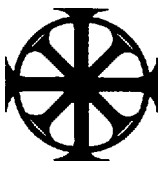
In issue one of Other Hands, *I wrote an article on how to set adventures in the First, Second, and Fourth Ages of Arda, which led to a further discussion between myself and Mats Blomqvist, one of the fellow gamemasters in my gaming group and a co-writer of the* Kin-strife *and* Southern Gondor *modules. Mats doubted whether it was possible to run a campaign in the Second Age, due to the scarcity of Tolkien's sources.*

This remark left me thinking for quite a while. Seemingly, Mats was right (the source material was limited to a few short pieces: Appendices A and B in The Return of the King, *"Akallaêth" in* The Silmarillion, *and Part Two of* Unfinished Tales*). Mats, a scholar of literature, said that what we read in those texts is not how Númenor actually was, but rather how the Dúnedain of the late Third Age saw Númenor through the scanty documents preserved from before the Downfall. It is not possible, for instance, to glean an adequate knowledge of the great engineering skills evidently possessed by the Númenóreans, nor of their daily life.*

Eventually I disagreed, believing it to be possible to successfully run a Númenor-related campaign, though such an endeavor requires quite a lot of preparations by the gamemaster. This article presents some of my ideas on the subject. I am fairly specific about a lot of details, not because I possess any special knowledge of them, but rather to show the enterprising gamemaster what kind decisions must be made during campaign preparations. The patchy primary sources have be augmented by the gamemaster's inventions before starting a campaign.



As I see, much of Númenor's history is quite boring, it being a well-run nation blessed by the Valar and with few disputes with other peoples. Hence it hardly provides enough punch for the average role-player, who wants a milieu with tensions and conflicts which may bring exciting adventures.

"The interesting times"[1] begin when the Númenóreans go really bad, from the coronation of Ar-Gimilzôr in 3102 to the Downfall in 3319. During these two centuries, the ruling elite of Númenor openly break with the traditions of past and cut all ties with the Eldar and the Valar. Númenor is wracked by political intrigue in which egotistical noblemen vie for influence and the King's ear. The King's Men are chauvinistic and suffer from overbearing pride in their perceived superior qualities.

Meanwhile, the Faithful try to survive in places such as Rómenna and Lebennin. They founded Pelargir in 2350 as their urban center in Middle-earth, from which they have easy contact with the Eldar of Edhellond. The Faithful community of Lebennin likely resembles what the future Gondor will be; hence there is ample useful information when designing it, both in primary sources and extant ICE modules.[2] It provides a good campaign environment in which the players have Faithful characters actively opposing Sauron's conspiracies and the oppressive policies of the King's Men.

The King's Men have established extensive colonies in Middle-earth, while shunning its northwestern parts due to the proximity of the Elves in Lindon and Lothlórien. The closest one is Umbar (others are located further south). However, the royal authorities in Umbar are very suspicious what "those Elf-lovers" in the Anduin vale are up to.

Sauron, now openly the King of Mordor, dislikes his next-door Dúnadan and Quendi neighbors, and would gladly see them crushed or expelled from the region. However, he is not yet willing to challenge the power of Númenor by a military move. He still remembers the defeat he suffered when fighting the united armies of Lindon and Númenor in Eriador around SA 1700.

The land of Lebennin

Silver flow the streams from Celos to Erui.
In the Greenfields of Lebennin!
Tall grows the grass there. In the wind from the sea
The white lilies sway,
And the golden bells are shaken of mallos and alfirin
In the wind from the sea!

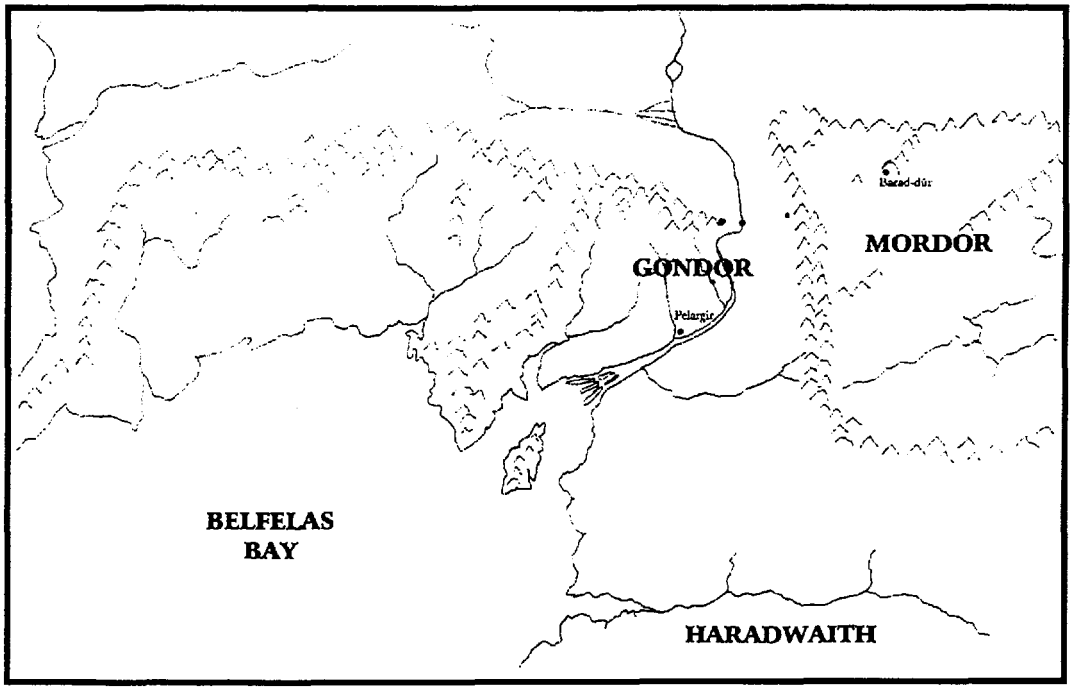
Lebennin is a fertile land of plains. Its original population consisted of Daen tribes, cousins of the inhabitants of Enedwaith. However, the plains tribes have been subjected to a strong Faithful influence since the early parts of the third millennium of the Second Age; hence they are "Dúnadanized" to a great extent. The Faithful have migrated from Elenna to Lebennin since the days of Tar-Atanamir the Great, at which time they realized that Númenor's ruling elite had begun to stray from the traditions of Elros.

On the other hand, before the arrival of the men of Westernesse, the area was under Sauron's influence. Those Daen clans that preferred the Shadow moved away when the Faithful settlers gained influence, retreating into the valleys of Ered Nimrais and the Belfalas peninsula. They still remain there, ready to serve the Lord of Mordor and hateful of the Faithful. The Dúnedain call them the Wild Men of the Mountains.

In the last centuries of the Second Age, Lebennin's total Faithful population is about one million, of which less than 10% is of pure Númenórean descent.[3] There is only one major city, Pelargir, but its countryside is dotted with numerous villages and small towns.[4] The well-fortified haven has about ten thousand inhabitants and is the administrative center of the region. Its lord belongs to the line of Imrazôr and is recognized as the local leader by all the Faithful. He is theoretically respon-

sible to the King of Númenor, but in practice Lebennin has gradually acquired a semi-autonomous status with very little influence by the royal authorities.

In this period, Lebennin should probably be portrayed as a somewhat more rural version of late Third Age Gondor. There are many similarities in how the "state" and civil society works, with the Lord of Lebennin in a position similar to that of the ruling Stewards of Gondor. However, the notable Elven presence is a major difference from later ages. It is also clear for the Faithful settlers of late Second Age Lebennin that their land is but a small part of the mighty Númenórean empire and that they are an openly disliked minority.



The Lebennians know of Sauron of Mordor, too. At this time, he has not extended his dominion west of the Ephel Dúath, but those Faithful that live in Lossarnach can see the forbidding black mountain range at their eastern horizon. They realize that Sauron hates the descendants of the Edain for their participation in the war against Morgoth in the First Age and that he aspires for dominion over all of Middle-earth.

However, the Faithful have powerful friends in the Elves, since the two kindreds are not yet sundered. There are frequent visits by Elves to Pelargir, much to the chagrin of the King's Men in Umbar. The Elf-haven of Edhellond on the west side Belfalas peninsula is a notable urban settlement in Lebennin's vicinity. It is smaller than Pelargir and purely Elvish. Its main task is to facilitate the emigration of Elves to Aman, just like the comparable havens in Lindon. It is mostly Elves from Greenwood the Great, Lothlórien and the East that go to Edhellond. Another ally are the Drúedain of the forests. This people hate the Orcs of Mordor and desire to keep their ancestral lands free of outsiders, a wish respected by the Lord of Lebennin.

The Enemy's Machinations

During the two centuries preceding the Akallabêth, Lebennin does not suffer from major foreign invasions. Instead, the Faithful have to deal with the schemes of three hostile neighbors which for various reasons wish to assume control over the region or destabilize it.

The Wild Men jealously watch how the Faithful have turned the region into a bountiful land, and they wish to conquer it since they consider it to be theirs. However, the mountain tribes are disorganized barbarians and do not pose a military threat to the well-organized Lebennin society. On the other hand, should an opportunity appear, hotspurs among the Wild Men will certainly use it to attack their hated neighbors.

Certain haughty and proud nobles among the King's Men of Umbar want to crush the Faithful, their ideological opponents, and subjugate them to the King's rule. However, as long as Lebennin's settlers are not openly hostile to the Crown, they cannot be chastised by armed might. Also, Lebennin serves as a useful military buffer against Mordor. It would be strategically unwise for Sauron to make a move against Umbar without neutralizing Pelargir first, otherwise the fortified city would threaten his southbound lines of communication across the Poros. To be able to justify an Umbarian occupation of Lebennin, these noblemen must create a credible impression that the settlers of Lebennin are enemies of the Crown, for instance by provoking them to actions that could be interpreted as treasonous.

Sauron desires to eradicate the ideals of the Faithful from Middle-earth as that would make it far easier to corrupt the remaining Númenóreans even more. However, he cannot make a military move against a Númenórean possession without engaging in a full-scale war with that nation, a conflict he doubts he would win. Instead, he has to destroy Lebennin from within, either by spreading spiritual corruption or by causing the authorities in Umbar to strike at the Faithful community. The latter could for instance be achieved by covertly deceiving the Governor of Umbar (an ardent King's Man) to believe that the Lebennians intend to rebel against Númenor and secede from the realm.

Sauron and the plotters in Umbar have, unbeknownst to each other, inserted several covert agent teams into Lebennin with the intention to destabilize the region. Sauron is only using corrupt men originating from the region for his operation, since others would

attract too much attention. Some Sauronic teams will incite the mountain tribes to raid outlying settlements. Others will try to establish Evil cults in Pelargir with the long-term goal of corrupting Lebennin from within. One will engage in seemingly random terror attacks on known King's Men that visit the area or on property belonging to the King, e.g. the small naval installations in Pelargir's port.

The Umbarian agents have other tasks. One team will spread false information that implies an Umbarian military move against Lebennin. For instance they could possess forged documents detailing how an Umbarian garrison will take over the defense of Pelargir and try pass these into the Lord of Lebennin's hands. Another will try to convince the Lord that people he have trusted are scheming together with certain Umbarian nobles to seize power in Lebennin.

Suddenly, the Lord receive seemingly unconnected leads that imply that Lebennin faces a major political crisis that could lead to an Umbarian intervention and the end to the autonomy of the Faithful.[5] There are strange rumors of the Shadow gaining a foot-hold in his land, too. He asks a team of trusted underlings (i.e., the player-characters) to investigate what evil is afoot. They must act with discretion and without any legal powers, since the Lord does not to attract the attention of Umbar's Governor.

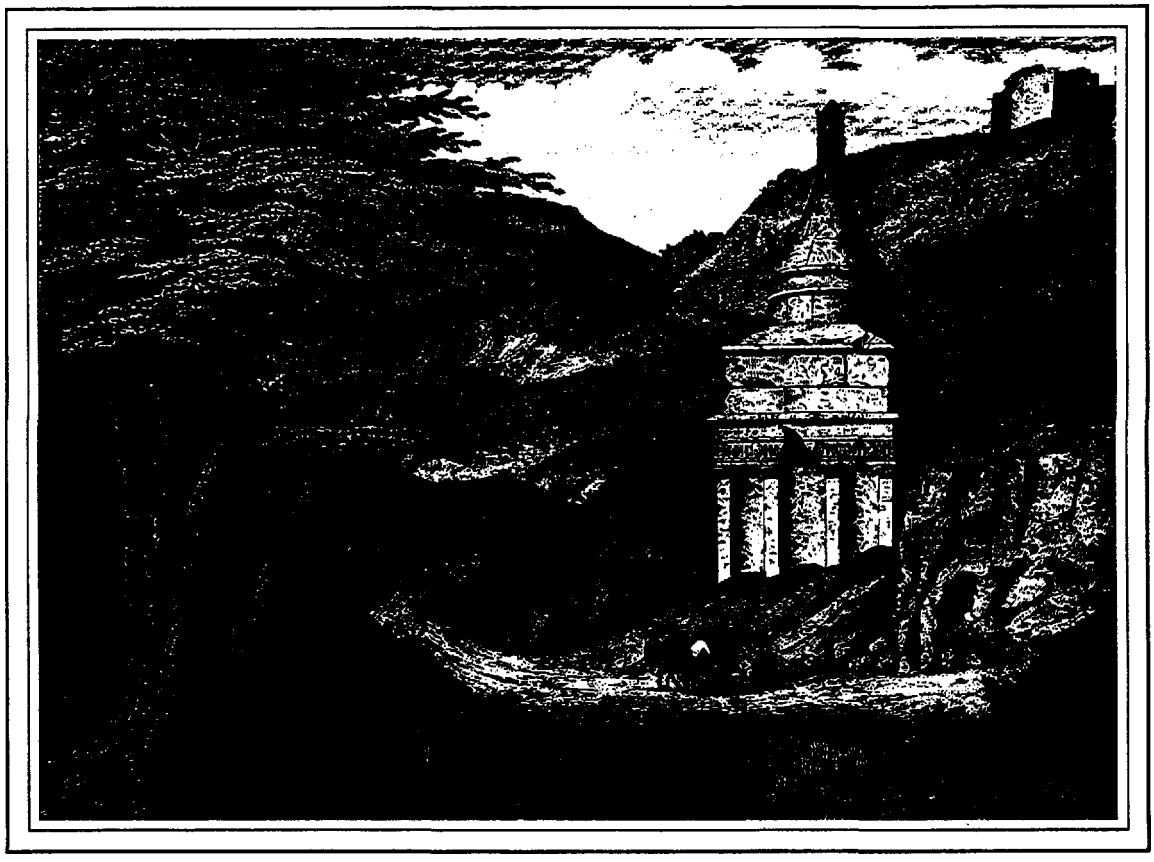
Meanwhile, the many evil conspiracies collide. Neither Sauron nor the Umbarian nobles know that the other party is pursuing similar goals. Also, for security reasons each set of agents does not always know what their compatriot teams are up to. There is ample opportunity for chaos and combat in the dark alleys of Pelargir. The inquisitive players will get involved in many dangerous matters and they will acquire some very powerful foes who are able to seriously harass them in the future even if they uncover and interrupt the nefarious schemes.

Tolkien's texts on Second Age history do not speak much of what happens in Lebennin during the last centuries of Númenor's existence. The gamemaster is actually able to justify a temporary Umbarian intervention and occupation of Lebennin without contradicting what Tolkien has written. Hence a failure by the players to uncover what plots are going on could well have disastrous consequences for their province, bring years of oppressive rule by the King's Men.

The campaign could men shift its focus and deal how to resist the occupiers' tyranny and alleviate the plight of the Faithful commoners (cf. the legends of Robin Hood).[6] One way of dealing with the campaign would be to let the players participate in the planning and preparations for a popular uprising in Lebennin. When the opportune moment offers itself in the chaos following Númenor's demise, the characters could lead the insurrection in some place and be the first to welcome the survivors from Elenna when their storm-driven ships reach the shore.

Footnotes

1. At least as seen from the perspective of this famous Chinese proverb.
2. After all, Lebennin is where Elendil and his sons established their South-kingdom. They must have adopted a lot of existing political and social practices when founding the new state of Gondor.
3. The figure is based on Gunnar Brolin's reasonings on demography in earlier issues of *Other Hands*.
4. Keep in mind that Minas Anor, Minas Ithil, and Osgiliath are founded after the Akallabêth.
5. In fact, many of the clues are unconnected since they originate from different foes.
6. The coming Kin-strife module contains a long section on what that is like during Castamir's reign. Much of the information can easily be transferred to this milieu.



Before the Trial: an introduction to a Second Age campaign

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It is the year 2217 of the Second Age. In Númenor, the king, Tar-Atanamir, once the strongest of his line, is failing into weak-willed dotage as he clings to life. Repercussions are inevitable: in Númenor, in western Middle-earth, and in the distant lands of Rhûn and Harad of which only dark rumour comes over the sea into the West. The Wars of the Jewels are long gone. The War of the Rings also is over, with Sauron's heavy defeat and expulsion from Eriador at the turn of the eighteenth century—or is it? Who will uphold and who will betray the principles of peace and law in a changing world?

"But we must stop this man! Bring him to Númenor and we shall have him before the council! We shall show him, however big he may be in those jungles and what-have-you," the florid Lord Erildar waved his beringed hand in the direction of Middle-earth, far across the dark seas from Armenelos. "He cannot just ignore the King's Government—impudent upstart."

Berenor cringed inside. The Councillor from the Forostar was not an effective politician and clearly knew nothing of the legal issues involved in the case. For his master to involve Erildar at this stage was rash, and he personally had argued against it. He turned to Silmarion, the aging Lord of Andúnië, who settled back into his velvet armchair.

"That is the problem, Erildar," he said calmly. "How do we get the Government to call him back? It would be the Steward's decision, and he gave the man a Governorship in the first place. How do we encourage our honoured friend to admit that he has made a mistake

"Denounce him in council, Andúnië! We'll soon get him out of office. If he appointed a man like this, the fool should be put away as well as dismissed." Erildar was incensed at the reports from the Harad, and Berenor knew enough of his reputation to see that he wouldn't let the issue lie.

Silmarion turned to Berenor, and the lawyer tried to smooth his own nerves. "My Lord," he said, as soberly as he could, to Erildar. "The legal position of the Lord Governor Herucarnë is still very much in doubt. The news Lord Silmarion has received of events in Middle-earth is troubling, certainly, but because those who relayed the news cannot safely be revealed, there is little proof against the Governor which could stand in the Royal Court."

Lord Erildar snorted and scratched his broad chin. "Isn't there…damn. So, are we to let this scoundrel get away with banditry, and butchering the natives, and murdering poor Elendir…?"

"That has not been proven, Lord Erildar," Berenor interrupted desperately, "The word was his death was suspicious, but Lord Herucarnë was reported to be in his own haven of Carnalondë. And the Haradrim are not Númenórean citizens, and therefore"—Erildar turned the full force of his glare on the lawyer.

Berenor cringed, but Silmarion saved him from rebuttal: "We are going to move, Erildar, but not in public, not yet The Steward is the key. He's Edrathor's man, so the First Herald will want to see him out of office. But remember the movements of bullion—I think our noble friend is being paid handsomely to Herucarnë in office, *via* several different associations. If we can prove that, then we can get

him out, whatever First Lord Edrathor say about it.

"But we can't move too quickly. Times have changed, my friend." The Lord of Andúnië gazed out the window of the appointed townhouse. The streets of Armenelos were thronged with afternooncrowds. Far off over the roofs the golden spires of the palace, and the surrounding government buildings, rose against the distant shadow of Meneltarma.

"Aye," said Erildar. His gruff voice was pensive now. "What's the King doing in all this? There was the time, not long ago, he would've been to the bottom of this and never mind who was paying or which minister was friends with which. Always liked to know was going on, the King. But what is he now?" The landowner shook his head his drooping moustache followed the motion. "He's hanging on, Silmarion. King'll be seventeen and four hundred by the winter, that's many more than many of his fathers have seen. Ought to go now, or at least give up sceptre. He's not been able to concentrate for years now, and his mind wanders. He'll go soon whether he wants to or not."

Berenor found the Councillor's company suddenly even more uncomfortable. To induce the King to pass on his sceptre—or to give up his life! That was treason, and the strict reprisals practised by Tar-Atanamir in his more vigorous days were now under the control of others.

"'The Heir's no better, my friend," said Silmarion. "He thinks of nothing but his treasury, and how to expand it without working for it. it's a time for the likes of Edrathor, and Imrazôn, and now this Herucarnë—unless we stop them."

Erildar reached for his decanter. "Here's spit in Edrathor's eye," he said. "You'll stay to dinner, won't you, Andúnië?"

When Erildar had left the room, Silmarion took the moment for a private word with his lawyer.

"He is a useful contact, Berenor. He was close to Atanamir once, but he's no King's Man. We shall need him when this comes before the Council."

"But, my Lord, if he mentions this to one Edrathor's party..."

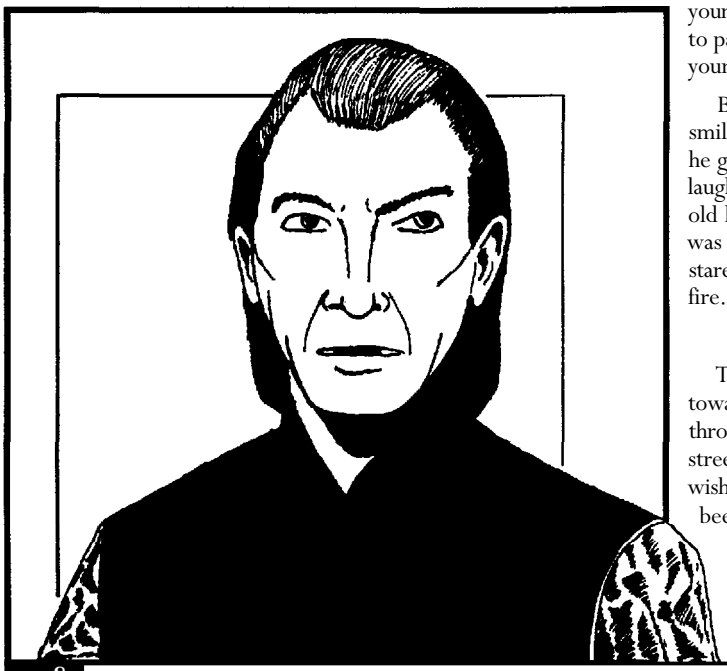
The Lord of Andúnië looked up from his chair. Berenor saw plainly his great age and his weariness. "We'll need his support now. He has friends in Elenion's Company and they'll be watching him less than our merchants. I want to get more men to Vinyalondë before the year is out. This will be a long case, Berenor, but we will bring this man before the Council."

Berenor bowed, and pulled his cloak closer around him.

"When do we go home?" he thought; but the Westlands were far away, and they both had further tasks in Armenelos.

He turned to Silmarion. "I will visit the Academy library while I am here. But evidence is the key. If you are to put the Governor on trial, there must be proof—witnesses. We will send more agents to Middle-earth, and ask for advice. I have more friends in Eriador than my captains and grain buyers! The Harad is the key, and remember the rumours: there are troubles beyond the Sea of Rhûn. You cannot suspect..."

Silmarion smiled, and his proud features softened. "I suspect every shadow, Berenor. I am fearful and old; you are young, and are not subject to paranoia. So go! Apply your youthful ingenuity."



Berenor bowed and left, smiling slightly. But when he glanced behind, the laughter was gone from the old lord's face, and there was pain in his eyes as he stared into the flickering fire.

The lawyer walked back towards his apartment through the crowded streets. He was hungry, and wished that Erildar had been more expansive with his hospitality. There was time to eat before

an evening in the library.

The carriage of a nobleman clattered past, and looking up he saw the devices of Lord Imrazôn, the First Herald himself. His heart quailed that he might have to face that man across the Hall of the Sceptre before many months were over—he was not a Royal Court lawyer! But Lord Silmarion bad been unwilling to engage a professional advocate in Armenelos, and so his legal adviser and assistant magistrate had been plucked from the estates in Andúnië and given a case of national importance.

It was a good life in Andúnië for a young man with no great ambition. The Lord and his household were generous, there was a pleasant apartment, the chance of a family in a few years—and there were the Eldar. They came seldom to Númenor in these days, and mostly to the lords in the west. Marvellous folk! He remembered the clear voices and dancing images of the Elven minstrels' song, and the great tales of Beleriand and Valinor.

The country estates and heather-crowned mountains of the Andustar were far from tile noise and bustle of the Mittalmar, of Armenelos and Rómenna. The great fleets, the dominions and colonies, the trade, the growing problems of administration seemed to require more and more men and more and more offices from year, to year, and the cities grew— "progress."

But here was a problem which required more than administration. Berenor had never left the Yôzâyan, but the tales of the forests and mountains of Middle-earth, the clear images of the elf-lands and the mansions of the Dwarves, were dear to him. The thought of this man and his greed spreading war and murder in those distant lands left a bitter taste in his mouth. But what could be done by a small man such as himself? He remembered

the thunder of the hoofs of Rochallor, and the glitter of Ringil, in the clear tones of Elven-song, as Fingolfin rode to the gates of Angband. But those days were gone.

"Berenor! Is it really you?" The lawyer was pulled from his wandering droughts.

He was greeted by a tall, thin man of about his own age, richly dressed, with oiled black hair curled about his shoulders. His face was familiar, but it took the lawyer a few moments to remember his name. "Valandur?"

For a moment the smiling, welcoming face seemed to suppress a scowl. "Oh, that was just a nickname. Call me Harekthor." The awkward moment seemed to pass. "It's strange to see you in the city."

"Yes," Berenor said, still slightly puzzeled by the other man's manner. "I'm only here for a few days—on business."

Harekthor shook his head in mock bemusement. "The country is no place for a man like you. Look, you must come back with me for dinner this evening. We have so much to catch up." The man's manner was so earnest that Berenor found it hard to refuse outright.

"Look...Harekthor...I have to visit the College. There are some texts I need to look over today."

"Fine. Come along later, about sunset. Here's the address." Berenor found himself handed a card. He was sure that Harekthor had been toying with the slip of paper in his pocket.

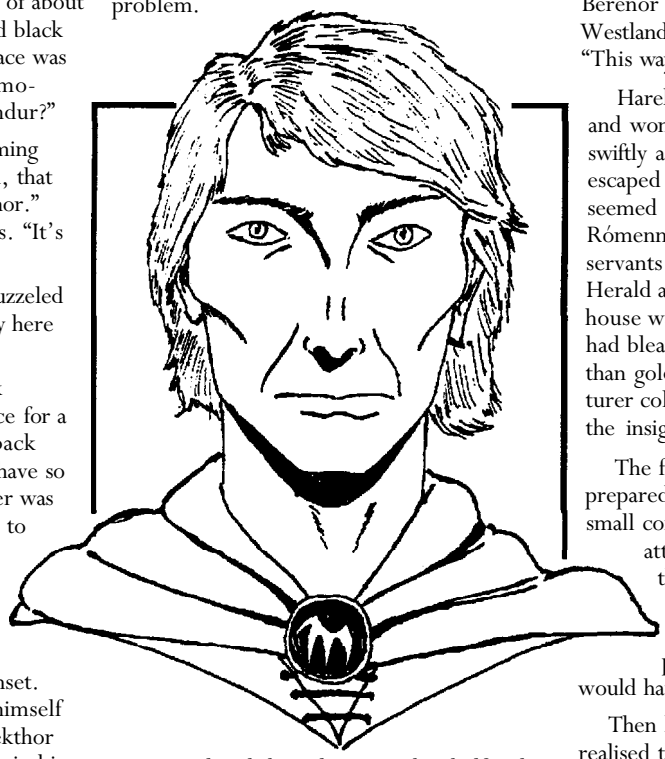
Berenor glanced at the card. "Is this your house?"

"No!" The other man laughed. "One of my friends lives there. He'll be pleased to meet you! Don't be too late." The two shook hands and Harekthor plunged away into the crowd.

As he trudged on towards the academy, his scrollcase tucked under one arm, Berenor tried remember if he had ever said more than "Good morning" to Valandur in all their years together at the Royal College of Law. He shrugged. The ways of the city had always been a little strange to him.

The statutes regulating the establishment of the Protectorate Dominions in Middle-earth were as obscure as ever, despite their superficially tight wording. The colonies belonged to the King, and the Númenórean and native landholders were his tenants; they were answerable to the Steward of the Royal Estates as much as any other property-holders. But the Governor exercised the Steward's power there across the sea, and there was little which could be done to impeach a Governor who was also the major tenant in the dominion.

That was an abuse of the statutes which could be traced back to the Steward. But the Steward was the King's appointee, and the present incumbent was the protégé of the First Lord of the Council. Berenor shook his head. This was a difficult matter. He just wished Lord Silmarion could have found a sharper agent than himself to attack the problem.



He replaced the volume on the shelf and gathered up his papers. Wandering back through the library corridors, he was affected by a certain nostalgia for his years of study. He strolled quietly down one line of shelves into an alcove where he had spent too much of his youth. The desk was still there, but when he checked the shelves the well-worn scrolls of the lays of Beleriand were gone. Instead there were thick leather-bound volumes of collected Númenórean philosophy labelled in plain Adûnaic.

Berenor signed and turned away. For a moment, he thought he caught a glimpse through the shelves of a shadowed face, watching him. Then the student—or maybe it was an irritable librarian—moved silently away.

The house to which Harekthor had directed him was in an impressive terrace of fine apartments south of the royal district. Here there were no people as evening fell, and he walked the wide street, among its marble pillars. alone. Over the roofs he glimpsed the topmost spire of the Hall of the Sceptre, and shivered. The Hall reached for him like the shadow of distant doom, awaiting the day when he would confront the advocates of the First Lord before the entire Council.

He found the building. A servant opened tile door, and led him into a corridor panelled with fine hardwoods from the forests of the Harad. The servant was of Middle-earth, but not of the Haradrim, though black men were brought to Númenor by some wealthy households. He was a stocky man with cropped black hair and a strange cast to his features. Berenor thought he was a native of the Westlands. His Adûnaic was slightly accented. "This way, Sir. Dinner has been laid."

Harekthor was dining with a party of men and women who were introduced to Berenor swiftly as he entered the room. The names escaped him with equal swiftness, but most seemed to be either figures from one of the Rómenna trading companies, or mid-rank servants of the Crown in the offices of the Herald and the Steward. The owner of the house was a portly man named Hador, who had bleached his hair to a shade nearer white than golden. Several of the men wore Venturer collars, and one of the merchants bore the insignia of high rank within the Guild.

The food was abundant, rich and well-prepared. Berenor ate well and exchanged small conversation with Harekthor and an attractive young woman sitting opposite them. He was warming to Harekthor and his rather threadbare College reminiscences. This was a far more pleasant evening than the one he would have spent in his apartment, alone.

Then his companions fell silent, and be realised that they were listening to a young man who was holding forth beyond Harekthor.

"Imrazôn is right in principle," he was stating in a self-important tone. "There is no question about that. The balance of power is the key. Our interests will always be served by ensuring that no other power becomes dominant in Middle-earth. But his application of principle is flawed. Seriously flawed."

Berenor leant forward to catch a glimpse of the speaker. He was dressed in black silks, and he was thin with very sharp features. He made his points with sharp, downward cuts of his right hand, and rested his elbows calmly on the table, when speaking more evenly. Berenor was surprised to see the man dart a glance in his direction while he continued.

"To support the Dwarves is clearly wrong. Who is stronger than the King of Khazad-dûm? And he is dangerously close to Tharbad and Vinyalondë. He could cut off our supplies of grain if he wished to expand. At the moment, there is trouble brewing in Inner Harad. If the princes there become aggressive, we need an ally in the North, and that has to be either Belkhan and Rhûn, or Mordor."

"I think that Lindon is still a viable ally," said the young woman siting opposite Berenor. "The Elves have reason to be grateful, and

there's no danger of them becoming too powerful." A few diners on either side laughed t that. "What do you think, Berenor ?"

He glanced around. Most of the surrounding men and women seemed to be staring at him. He cleared his throat. "We should always think about their intentions," he said cautiously, trying to match the confidence of the other speakers. What would he say? That Ereinion Gil-galad was the rightful High King in Middle-earth? That Sauron of Mordor was a demon?

"Mordor has proved treacherous in the past," he said at last.

"But its interests are clear," said the sharp-faced man in black, glancing over at him now. "Lindon will turn against the Dwarves anyway—they are natural enemies—but Mordor might well ally with them, unless we offer Mordor enough to side against Khazad-dûm and against the princes of Inner Harad."

Berenor didn't have the will, or the nerve, to fight. He made a nonchalant gesture, "There could be trouble, yes."

The man turned away to answer another question. Berenor relaxed and took a draught of wine, but the woman across the table caught Berenor's eye as he turned back. "I think the Lord of Ándúnië puts a useful line," she said.

"He's a very wise man," he replied, beginning to forget caution.

"How is life in Andúnië?" Harekthor asked; and sipping at his wine, Berenor answered their questions about the hills and the remaining woodlands of the west.

It was only later when he realised that he had been coaxed onto dangerous ground. "There are problems in the Harad," he was saying.

"Oh?" asked the woman. "Are the natives causing trouble again?"

"No," he said. "Not the natives." For a moment he was silent, and then he said, "Do we not provoke the Haradrim? Our lords and governors subjugate more and more of Middle-earth—not merely the old ports, but always new plantations and new slaves to work them."

The woman shrugged. "We need food."

"Not slaves," Harekthor added.

Berenor shook his head. "But Vinyalondë and Eriador provide enough to feed us."

"For the moment," said a voice, and once again Berenor saw the man in black looking in his direction. "But we are vulnerable unless we control enough of Middle-earth to be secure. Lindon, or Moria, or Mordor could sweep away the farms in Eriador. And if our sources of wood are cut off, then ships of Endor could threaten the Yôzâyan."

"And there is other wealth than food," burst in the merchant, Hador. "What of the spices that come out of Rhûn? What of gold out of the South, silver out of the East? What of the precious woods, or the fine stone for our tombs ? We need to hold the Harad as well as Eriador, and we should not be deterred from the greatest venture of all"—he pointed east in a dramatic gesture—"deep Rhûn, and the lands of the Sioni. If we could control the source and trade by sea," the man slapped the table with his hand, "no power would have a hold on us."

The man in black glanced at Hador with annoyance. Why? But Berenor could not collect his thoughts. He turned away and lifted his goblet. Conversation resumed around him.

The young woman looked at him in sympathy. "These merchants do become overexcited at the prospect of wealth, do they not? But there must be restraint. This Lord Governor, now, what can be done about him?"

"I don't know," he said. "Without more evidence, he cannot be recalled. Or the Steward might be pressured. Or the First Lord." He took a deep draught of wine. "I think my Lord knows more than he tells me. He has a plan...send to Middle-earth, go to friends in Vinyalondë...Lindon...the only way."

"Who will be sent, do you think?"

But Berenor's thoughts had begun to wander. "We are like the Lords of the Noldor," he said. "We think that we have defeated the shadow. We think that our power is everything and that none stand before us. But we have lost the jewels that once were ours, and all our strength cannot recover them. And so we begin to fight., to fight amongst ourselves....I am tired." The lawyer folded his arms on the table and lay down his head.

Other guests were advanced in drink and did not notice. But the woman's fair face scowled in anger. "Who will Silmarion send?" she asked softly, brushing Berenor's brow. But he did not move. Her eyes met those of the sharp faced man in the black shirt, and then she turned to Harekthor. "Have him taken home," she whispered. "He is not yet to be harmed. Go to Rómenna and report."

Sounds of revelry continued all around.

"Now?" Harekthor protested. He glanced towards a certain man, a man dressed in blue cloth farther along the table, and saw that the man's eyes were staring coldly into his own. He quickly glanced away. "Of course," he said, and went for the servant.

The man in blue gazed at Berenor, without expression. He was toying with a plain gold ring which hung from a fine chain around his wrist. He did not put it on his finger.

The Journal of Eponian Círdanea

Scott Stanek:
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USA

This is the personal journal of Eponian Círdanson, a character taken from a First Age campaign which began with the awakening of Elves. Poni is a latecomer to the campaign and is therefore the first of the children of Elves in play. While most of us were born and raised in Beleriand, some were born on Ulmo's island during the voyage to Aman. Poni himself was different, as he was carried across to Valinor directly by Oromë as one of his "chosen"—the first shape-shifter—and marked with striped fur so that all animals of the wood would recognize him as Oromë's and not harm him.

My name is Eponian. I am the child of Círdan the shipwright and a Maia of the wood. My father may yet be unaware of my nature, for it was not long after he left my mother that he found his true love in the sea and the works of Ossë.

While living in the forests of Beleriand, I found that, like my mother, I could shift form—either to that of Elf or mink—and spent much time wondering whether I was an Elf who could take the form of mink, or a mink who could be an Elf. My life changed abruptly when the Hunter found me during his travels in Beleriand. He took a liking to me and, placing me across his steed before him, carried me to Valinor, to the Wild Wood of Aman which was home to all the creatures he brought into that land to hunt or keep. He gave me stripes to mark me as his own and made this pronouncement:

Never harmed nor hindered wilt thou be, by creature of wood or servant of the Hunter, unless thou first seek to bring them harm.

There, in his wood, I first saw Yavanna and her Maiar, and grew to love their ways as much as Oromë's. It was there that I met the one called Callana, at first a horse and then an Elven maid. Obviously, she also had some Maia in her parentage.

Before the Elves had come, I was ruled by the cycles of the Two Trees. When Laurelin's light was dominant, I was an Elf. When Telperion's shining was greater, I was a mink. It was during this time, while in mink-form, that I came upon a lady weeping in the wood and, seeing her crying, wished to comfort her. I did not know or care if she were Maia, Vala or other, so I went to her and climbed upon her lap to nuzzle her.

I wished only to make her less sad, but as her tears fell upon me, I felt her sorrow lighten for a moment as she stroked my fur. I felt and understood all that she was sad about, knowing all that would happen: all the woes and tribulations of what would come. I also knew, and cried and cried.

I awoke later without remembering what it was I had been sad about, but the lady was gone. I realized later that the lady had been Nienna, and that she had given me the power to feel as others do, knowing their emotion and able to tell when they lie. I was also given flashes of understanding when some woe came to pass, but thankfully never before.

During my travels in Valinor, I saw the works of Aulë's smiths, and felt the itch in my own fingers to do the same; but coming upon Aulë's workplaces, I was assaulted by the smell of burning wood and the destruction of that which Yavanna held in high regard. I nearly went mad, being so torn by my desire to make, but unable to do so without unmaking that which I too held dear. So, at first I only made with bits and pieces thrown away by smith or found in natural state, and my yearnings to do more grew even as the pain in my heart weakened.

There came a time when I burned my hands upon the vessel holding Laurelin's dew; and it was then that I first learned that the Maiar were inherently different from us. I thought about nothing else for days, but found at last the solution to my dilemma.

It was in this time that others became known to me. At Manwë's decree, Elves (and others of note) had been brought to Valinor by Ulmo and Oromë. There was Vanarildë, a Noldo who taught me the rune-letters I use, and Maridinerë, the haughty Noldo, and Callana the Horse (or Unicorn) whom I first met in the Wild Wood.

The Kin-st

A *house divided*

cannot stand.

RIFE

It was during this time that the haughty Noldo requested a drop of Telperion's dew—and was granted it, but on the condition that she hold it herself or lose it forever. I searched through the cast-offs from Aulë's shops and found an Emerald cup with a broken stem, which I brought her, offering to make her a container to hold the precious liquid; but she (being the suspicious Noldo) declined, going instead to the Noldorin gemcrafter who then wandered Aman. But this gemcrafter took the cup and smashed it to smithereens (Apparently, he saw only the broken cup she asked him to work upon, or perhaps he was jealous of her having any part of the light of the Trees.).

The haughty Noldo would have walked away, leaving it all, had I not begun to gather the bits. She ran up, claiming them as her own. I only stepped back, ignoring her Noldo-like curses of "thief," and waited for her to finish. She gathered only the six largest pieces and left. I then gathered up the remaining pieces and all the dust, using a magic to merge them together.

With this (and the cast-off metals from Aulë's shops I had gathered together), I was ready to pursue my plan. I went to Yavanna and made my plea, asking her for the boon only she could grant. I asked that I be allowed to make a hammer by the heat of Laurelin alone, which contained a bit of the heat and light of that Tree, so that I could forge and work metal without burning wood. She granted my request, and blessed my works that "made beauty but destroyed nature not."

I spent much time working before Laurelin's place, and by force of will chose not to change shape when its light waned. By working continuously, I was able to finish and smooth the head and shaft very quickly. While working, I sang songs learned from listening to Aulë's Maiar, and wove spells of my own design to make the hammer hard and strong.

I used Vanarildë's runes to embed it with magic that would link it to me, so that it would seek me out from distance should I lose it. I forged it so that it would be large, but it was nearly weightless because the balance was so close.

I used up the materials I had garnered from Aulë's cast-offs and considered the first forging done. I then spent a similar time working to smooth the metal, and to work upon it runes of power and strength, of making and intelligence. I sought not to entrap a spirit within it, but made a vessel in which a good spirit would be welcome. I set the haft with diamond, and rubies and sapphires dotted the head in a pattern much like the leaf and flower of Laurelin. I broke my first hammer in the forging, and my anvil melted as butter when first I lay the new hammer upon it.

My first project was to make a small anvil of mithril, coated with the dust left from the making of the hammer (thereby giving proof of its heat). I made it hollow so that I could carry within it metals and tools for the forging. I made my tools of mithril, all enchanted with hardness and heat resistance.

It was then that I realized the true gift Yavanna had given me. I knew not what to do save to use it to make. I therefore made her a gift, a rose from the combined dust of the emerald of Telperion and the hammer which held part of Laurelin.

This rose was of crystal, and light shown from within it in harmony with the cycle of the Trees (though it did not truly store the dews themselves). I gave my small gift to Yavanna and made her an oath that this hammer would make in the name of good and unmake evil in turn. That which is natural would never have to fear it.

It was around this time that I first tried to change form to something other than a mink. I found that I could become like the hounds that Oromë hunted with. I could even assume a shape like unto the Dark Unicorn or Oromë's steed. I thought it would surprise everyone, but those who knew me recognized my stripes, which remained with every form that I took. My forms now include mink, unicorn, bear, horse, owl, eagle (including that of a great eagle), stag, raccoon, and tree—and it was only later that I found how different the Valinorian specimens of these were from those of Middle-earth. Only the largest or best of each were brought to Aman.

I learned how to control the powers of my mind: to walk on water, or speak by thought to other creatures of the forest, or move like Oromë over great distances by going to the Other Place. I also learned to fend for myself, and for others who cannot. I hunt for my food; but the Elves do not eat meat as I do. Therefore, to find them food, I follow those forest creatures that do not eat meat; these taught me to find salt deposits, and the nuts, berries and roots that are good. They showed me the herbs which heal, and instructed me when they should be eaten.

I first discovered that I could be both injured and healed when my companions and I encountered the Dark Unicorn in battle, after which we went to Estë's place, where one of her Maiar showed me how to heal myself. My right ear was severed, but is slowly growing back. My ribs also ache where the horn glanced across them—so close was I to death. Death is new and strange to me, a concept I have yet to grasp and learn more about as time moves on.

Once, when we came to the sea-shore, I found three shells. The first was a Green Nautilus (an emerald of life), the second a spiral horn of Salmar (a clerical miracle or wish), and the third was a piece of reddish coral, which shattered at my touch (a love philtre), and at which moment I realized something which had gnawed at my soul since I first met her: that I truly loved Callana.

Our group wandered in distant northern places, feeling oppressed by the growing tensions in Valimar between the one whose speech is like honey and the rest of the Valar and Elves. Fëanor made weapons then to guard the jewels he had made. We left the Noldor, looking northwards for other diversion, because they ceased in their laughter and play, and only watched and guarded and sullenly stepped aside when we passed.

It was because of this that we were unaware that while the Noldor guarded their things, a great evil had stolen upon our unguarded true treasures—the Two Trees—and destroyed them. Then the demon and the Liar had fallen upon the Noldor themselves, who stumbled in the dark like fools, and stole the Silmarils—the only hope of rekindling the Trees. Thus, although we were not present to the death-pain of the Two Trees, we still felt the sorrow, seeing the light die. And some of us there remembered the time before the Trees, when we moved only in starlight.

We were far to the north when word passed along that the evil pair was seeking escape in our direction; and we interposed ourselves in their path. But as we lay in wait, we heard the slow trod of many footprints, and the call of many voices in sorrowful song. We went to them and found that though the evil had escaped by other route, we were in the path of those who followed out of Valinor.

The songs we heard were those who wept for the Two Trees and for the lost treasures. Others were there who sang and spoke not, but glowered in wrath holding

tight to weapon and untrusting even of the other Elves. These were Noldor all, led by the gemcrafter I had known from so long ago, the one who had trapped the light of Two Trees in three jewels and lost them.

A winged messenger appeared, calling out for the host to turn back. Few did. Now, we realized the full import of the march, for the Doom of Mandos was spoken: those who go without the leave of Manwë may not return without that leave, and to those who turn away from the Valar a life of fearful wandering and broken hearts await.

As I made my own decision, I turned to see my own party split in twain, and Callana was already rehearsing her good-byes. I gave to Callana a gift, that she might find me should she ever seek me in the lands outside. It may also give me something to return to, someday. I turned to the cliffs and inscribed in the stone my own doom:

This day the Oath of Fëanor hath broken its first heart, it will not be the last.

I stood there on the sand after she had left, my feet touching sea but my heart returning to Valinor. Then I turned to follow those whom I had felt honor-bound to guide and care for, these folk who had left without plan or forethought, without knowledge of the lands they marched through. They were so many sheep, and many wolves were about.

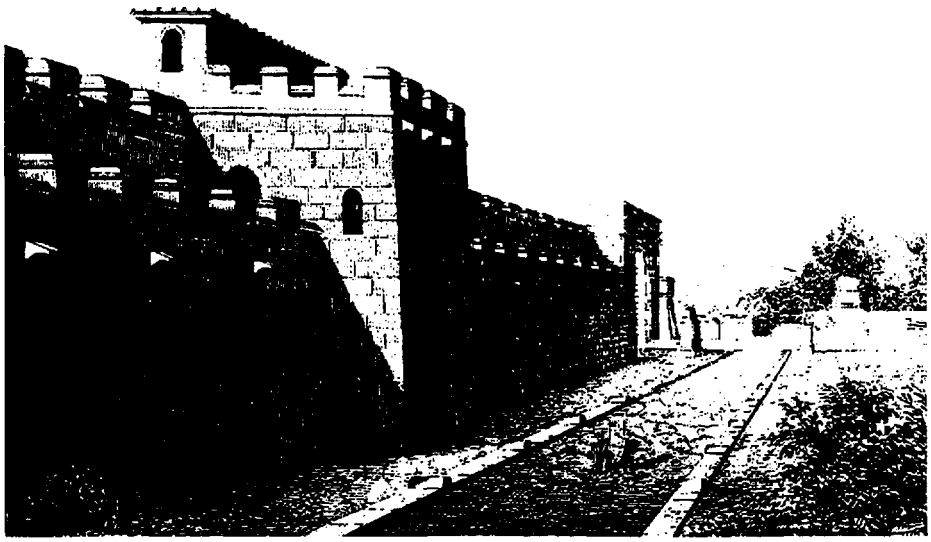
I cannot say many things about the times that followed. They were horrible, not least because of the treacheries of Fëanor's followers upon my Teleri brethren. The blood of Elves was all around me—in lost ice packs, on tooth of beast, and on weapons of the Enemy's minions.

We marched on ice across the northern wastes, and I was carried for some time, after being broken by Balrog (so broken that I still ache in the cold unnaturally). But I learned to live in the harsh clime and survived my fellow Elves, whom I helped to feed and protect.

We marched in the light of a new light in the sky, the white ship that carries some of Telperion's light (and the reason I went in "furred" shape for so much of the journey. When at last the land of our new home was sighted, it was by the golden light from the ship of Laurelin's fire, playing across the mountains ahead of us, The vessel came so close to us that it melted the ice behind us, scaling off the path back to the lands across an open sea. We wept for joy at reaching this new land, but no few of our tears were for that which we had lost.

We soon found that we were unwelcome in our new home, both among those who thought they had stranded us behind and among those Elves who had never gone to Aman and knew us only as those who had partaken in kinslaying. Our society (of sorts) split apart into wandering groups, only to fall prey to bands of Orcs and other things.

I married then a maid who had traveled with us (her ability to switch forms to my own second nature being too great a temptation to avoid, despite my memory of Callana). The birth of my children was more than enough to wash away the guilt I felt at my actions. I held the hammer as she forged them, the creation of seven new lives to Eru's greater glory, and it was good. My children grew as we traveled, and I took some portion of command to guide our path eastward, away from the coast, where our enemies were least. It was the only path which was not barred or barren.



And so we passed alone out of the histories of the Elves and into our own stories. Eventually, our path turned southwards, circling round like the Ages. We met the Dwarves and, later, mortal Men, passing without harm through their lands as ghosts. We learned of money and trade and counting, and of the benefit of speaking to a person in their own tongue to avoid misunderstanding. We became peddlers of my skill to gain things, though we lost as much.

One of my daughters left us and sought the path of evil, more (I hope) from magical influence than out of any evil on her part. Odo, my son was lost to us, and his capture led to my leaving and seeking for him with Ingwë, who sought for his own lost wife. I left after sending my remaining children to join my parents in the halls of Círdan whom, I had learned, was a lord among the sea-going Elves.

We fought together on the backs of great eagles with the host that lay assault to Angband in the War of Wrath. When the host of the West broke open the stony hall and chased its owner to deeper lairs, I looked and looked and found neither trace nor spoken word of my lost son or daughter.

When I returned to my compatriots, they seemed uneasy in my presence. I found out after much questioning that Callana had joined them, but had again departed with a Noldo, not to be seen again. She had been told that I was lost and gone, and she had given her heart to the next who had asked of it. I was crestfallen, remembering again the Doom of Mandos.

Another time that has Fëanor caused me heartbreak, another bit of anger to lump on Noldorin Elves. And yet I could not wish her ill, wherever she had gone. Sadness enveloped me, but I soon overcame it and at least appeared my old self.

We met the Elves and part-Elves of Númenor, and passed through their dominion. I liked them little, seeing too much of the Honey-tongued one in their actions. They were true children of Fëanor's stamp, though not of his line, and in every way tried to bring harm to us out of fear and envy. We left as soon as I could convince Ingwë that they were unclean. Later, we fell in with a city of artisans. I began to learn more from them but was swept away in a storm of some sort. The next thing I knew, I was on top of a very tall building in the rain....

Eponian Círdanea

(AD&D/Rolemaster/Ars Magica variant stats)

RACE: Sinda/Maia
AGE: c. 2700
CLASS: Warlock-Mage/Druid/Ranger
LEVEL: 12/13/13
DEITY: Eru

PSIONIC (Attack: 227 + Defense: 227 = 454): Body Equilibrium, Cell Adjustment, Animal Teleportation, Rapport, Invisibility, Levitation, Lights, Shape Alteration, Prob. Travel, Energy Control, Telekinesis, Restoration, Preservation, Power Transfer

WEAPONS: Hammer, Spear, Long Sword, Short Sword, Teeth/Claw, Dagger, Thrown Hammer, Thrown Spear, Short Bow, Sling, Thrown Dagger

ARMOR CLASS: 17 (chain and plate striped)

LANGUAGES: Quenya 185%, Eldarin 86%, Teleri 180%, Noldo 85%, Druid 190%, Mink 165%, Dwarven 40%, Valinorian Hound 129%, Valinorian Horse 89%, Valinorian Great Eagle 77%, Valinorian Great Bear 65%, Faerie Dragon 32%

SMITH SKILLS: Smithing 204%, Weaponmaking 187%, Pottery 129%, Glassblowing 95%, Potion Test 80%, Distillation 90%, Gem Evaluation 95%, Stone/Gem Lore 105%, Metal Lore 182%, Mining 49%, Alchemy 185%, Extruding 63%, Engraving 82%, Calligraphy 76%, Paper Making 66%, Book Making 91%, Wicker Weaving 87%, Gem Cutting 116%, Shipwright 69%, Wheelwright 89%, Tanner 69%, Craft Adamant 87%, Craft Ithilnaur 63%, Craft Mithril 102%

MISCELLANEOUS SKILLS: Hear Noise 68%, Locate Traps 63%, Fast Talk 31%, Evade Chase 97%, Open Locks 68%, Activate Traps 32%, Deactivate Traps 64%, Pick Pockets 22%, Dragon Lore 67%, Martial Arts 122%, Tumble Evasion 64%, Horse Training 83%

GENERAL SKILLS: General Perception 122%, Power Perception 120%, Balance Perception 136%, Psionic Perception 78%, S. Body Perception 106%, Touch Perception 146%, Tracking 232%, Herb Lore 130%, Read Tracks 155%, Surgery 92%, Cold Environment Survival 87%, Cold Environment Foraging 86%, First Aid 73%, S. Aid 68%, Desert Environment Survival 82%, Desert Environment Foraging 65%, Midwife 42%, Cleanse Meditation 80%, Swimming 183%, Divination 87%, Tactics 75%, Sleep Med. 98%, Ki Med. 86%, Anc. Astronomy 58%, Distance. Running 106%, Navigation 89%, Religion 82%, Identify Plants 150%, Identify Fresh Water 100%, Identify Animals 100%, Stargazing 69%, Singing 95%, Weather W. (166) 86%, Trade Lore 85%, Faerie Lore 85%, Mapping 80%, Cook 147%, Basic Math 105%, Advanced Math 92%, Scrounge 86%, Loading/Packing 65%, Tailor 91%, Driving 56%, Mnemonics 82%, Iajitsu Hammer 32%, Iajitsu Sword 42%

MAGICAL SKILLS: Power Projection 122%, Attune 65%, Channeling 64%, Symbol Lore 105%, Runes 144%, Magic Ritual 106%

MOVEMENT/CHANGE SKILLS: Control Lycanthropy 125%, Animal Senses 122%, Acrobatics 146%, Animal Attack Forms 104%, Aerial Acrobatics 92%, Psionic Blend 65%, Hide/Shadow (193) 133%, Prowl 87%, Silent Move 132%, Instinct Control 53%, Climbing (70) 135%, Circle Lore 85%, Quadruped Run 142%

CHARACTER QUIRKS:

1. Circus Born (+2 Agil +1 Dex +2 to thrown Dagger)

2. Cat Hater (save vs. 20-lvl or berserk on sight. +3 vs poison +1 Con)

3. Natural Shapechanger (Mink; extended to Valinorian Horse, Hound, Bear, and Great Eagle with all forms striped white and black like primary form is)

4. Striped even as Elf. (# changes = total lvls minus total classes; 33 changes currently for no cost)

5. Druidic Totem (Mink/Mongoose)

6. Prowl +57%, Scale Walls/Climb 70%, +4 Dodge/Parry

7. Taught as druid by Yavanna (+2 vs fire and lightning, +50% to Herb Lore)

8. Receptive Empath, caused by Tears of Nienna (Know lies, Know feelings of all around within sight, and extreme feelings of those out of sight).

9. Light of Valinorë (Alternating Golden and Silver, +3 AC (-3 to attacks for evils), Light changes every 12 hours continuous, silver/gold)

10. Blessed of Valinorë (+2 to all saves)

11. Chosen of Oromë (Cannot be harmed by natural animals except those I have harmed/attacked. Known by all servants of Oromë)

12. Taught in Ranger class by Oromë and his hunters (+1 w/ all Bows and Lances)

13. Mental Problem (Cold in joints from Arthritic condition. Caused by long recuperation in ice march from Balrog's breaking nearly all bones with lash)

14. Mental Problem (Severe Father-like reaction to any female elf. Loss of children and wife and true love has made him overly reactive to their image/memory)

15. Arrogant Noldor will be ignored, or disliked openly (Dislike of "Nobility" who require servitude)

Tarma Tar-Calion: A Historical Note on the Haven of Umbar

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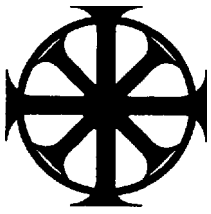
Despite the central role it plays in the history of Middle-earth, J.R.R. Tolkien had precious little to say about the layout and topography of Umbar, that most infamous haven where Ar-Pharazôn, last king of Númenor, humbled the might of Sauron in the year 3261 of the Second Age. One of the few features of Umbar which Tolkien does *relate to us pertains (not surprisingly) to this very event. It is stated in "Appendix A" of* The Lord of the Rings *that the followers of Elendil raised a monument commemorating Sauron's humiliation before the power of Númenor. This brief essay analyzes Tolkien's reference to this memorial, and then examines how subsequent Iron Crown authors have dealt with this text. It concludes with an interpretation of the monument's historical significance for those who erected it.*



The Text

Any sound evaluation of Ar-Pharazôn's monument must begin with a close reading of the primary source. The thirteen-line paragraph in which the reference to the monument appears is given with quotation marks, indicating that Tolkien intended it to be an "actual extract from a longer annal or tale" (RotK: 313). The fact that this passage is separated from the preceding (extracted) and following (summarized) text suggests that Tolkien conceived of it as deriving from a source document distinct or separate from the extract it follows (which we shall argue shortly). We quote the passage in full:

> 'The loss of Umbar was grievous to Gondor, not only because the realm was diminished in the south and its hold upon the Men of the Harad was loosened, but because it was there that Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, last King of Númenor, had landed and humbled the might of Sauron. Though great evil had come after, even the followers of Elendil remembered with pride the coming of the great host of Ar-Pharazôn out of the deeps of the Sea; and on the highest hill of the headland above the Haven they had set a great white pillar as a monument. It was crowned with a globe of crystal that took the rays of the Sun and of the Moon and shone like a bright star that could be seen in clear weather even on the coasts of Gondor or far out upon the western sea. So it stood, until after the second arising of Sauron, which now approached, Umbar fell under the domination of his servants, and the memorial of his humiliation was thrown down (RotK: 327-328).'

Before considering the content of our passage, we need to contextualize what it says by imagining what kind of "annal or tale" Tolkien was quoting it from: where, when and why was it written, and by whom?

To begin with, there are two events which imply a temporal location for the source: the final loss of Umbar to Sauron's "servants," and Sauron's second arising, "which now approached."[1] Tolkien never gives an exact date for Gondor's loss of Umbar to its enemies, though the year 1940 would be a fair guess.[2] As for the second arising of Sauron, this may refer to his open declaration and return to Mordor in 2951, although the text seems to imply that the loss of Umbar takes place *after* Sauron's "arising."

This discrepancy may be resolved by assuming that the final revelation of Sauron in 2951 would have led the Dúnedain of Gondor to reconsider their own history, and to "read back," as it were, Sauron's invisible hand in past events. This would imply that our passage could not have been composed before 2951.

It is instructive to note that the extracted materials which precede our passage in the "Annals" make reference to the reign of Elessar, but that the present passage does not. Considered on purely thematic grounds, our passage does not speak about final restoration under Elessar, but only of final loss in the shadow of Sauron's definitive arising.[3] This suggests that the source of our passage was written before the War of the Ring (2951 - 3018, a brief period of sixty-seven years).

I believe that our passage was composed during the rule of the Steward Ecthelion (2959-2980), perhaps by Aragorn himself. As supporting evidence I cite a later passage from the "Annals:"

> 'Thorongil [Aragorn] often counselled Ecthelion that the strength of the rebels in Umbar was a great peril to Gondor, and a threat to the fiefs of the south that would prove deadly, if Sauron moved to open war. At last he got leave of the Steward and gathered a small fleet, and he came to Umbar unlooked-for by night, and there burned a great part of the ships of the Corsairs. He himself overthrew the Captain of the Haven in battle upon the quays, and then he withdrew his fleet with small loss (RotK: 335).'

Numerous similarities in the theme, content, and perspective may be readily seen when comparing these passages, the most important being their common recognition of the threat posed by Umbar to Gondor as a result of Sauron's influence. The designation of the Corsairs as "rebels" is quite telling, since it implies a continued Dúnadan claim upon Umbar (on the basis of Sauron's subjec-

tion to the king of Númenor, of which the monument was a symbol). Moreover, the identification of Umbar's "Haven" (again, common to both passages) is rarely mentioned in Tolkien's other references to Umbar.

It is quite possible, then, that our passage was composed in the context of Aragorn's "counselling" of Ecthelion in Minas Tirith some twenty or more years before the War of the Ring. It testifies to a connection between the monument and Gondor's containment of the potentially hostile Haradrim. It also construes violence against the pillar as a rebellion against Dúnadan authority, citing its basis in Sauron's defeat by Ar-Pharazôn. This suggests that the monument was not "merely" a memorial of past victories, but that it served a concrete political function in its own time.

Umbar: Haven of the Corsairs (1982)

Brenda Gates Spielman's treatment of the monument in the original Umbar module adheres fairly closely to Tolkien's text, but with the significant difference that it has become a tower:

> in T.A. 933 Eärnil I, nephew of Falastur, defeated Umbar and made it a fortress of Gondor. The Faithful built on the highest hill above the Haven, a monument to commemorate Sauron's defeat, a great white *tower* topped by a globe of crystal which shown like a star under the light of the sun or the moon so that it could be seen on the coasts of Gondor and far out in the western sea....as Sauron rose again in power the Men of Harad fell fully under his sway. They retook Umbar and destroyed the monument built to his defeat (Spielman, 1982: 10; my emphasis).

The location of this tower is never explicitiy indicated anywhere in the module, though the cover art and maps imply, *contra* Tolkien, that it is situated on a solitary hill *in the middle of Umbar's harbor*, rather than "on the highest hill *of the headland*" as Tolkien clearly states.

What is surprising about this treatment is that Spielman never *makes* anything out of this tower in the module, thus raising the question of why she bothered to alter Tolkien's text in the first place. A comparative survey of the vocabulary of our primary passage quickly reveals that Tolkien never refers to a tower as a "pillar," nor does he ever refer to a tower as having been "set" up.[4] It seems highly dubious, therefore, to interpret Tolkien this way without severe justification.

Despite this odd misconstrual of Tolkien's intention, Spielman nevertheless faithfully adheres to Tolkien's claim that the monument was set up by "the followers of Elendil." She recognizes that this could not have been done before Eärnil's investment of the haven of Umbar in 933: "The city extends only to the Second Wall in T.A. 935. The monument to Sauron's defeat by Ar-Pharazôn is only in the planning stages (Spielman, 1982: 49; cf. 11)." She does not offer any dates for its completion.[5]

It seems to me more likely, however, that if (as the primary passage might be construed to suggest) the rise and fall of the monument corresponded to Gondor's political control (or lack thereof) over Haradwaith, that it would have been erected in 1050 by Hyarmendacil, symbolizing his utter defeat of the Haradrim and their Sauronically-inspired masters. Moreover, we know from the "Annals" that during the reign of Hyarmendacil: "the kings of the Harad did homage to Gondor, and their sons lived as hostages in the court of its King (RotK: 325)." As we shall argue later on, the monument to Ar-Pharazôn would provide the necessary symbolic focus for instituting these novel (and enduring) political relations.

The Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer (1993)

Mark Rabuck's synthesis of information about the realms of northwestern Middle-earth includes a section on Umbar, which contains a significant deviation from both Tolkien and Spielman's texts. He writes: "A great monument raised by the Númenórean King Ar-Pharazôn to commemorate his victory over Sauron guards the entrance to the harbor (Rabuck, 1993: 91)."

Rabuck, then, incorporates the implicit error of the original 1982 Umbar module map, and then contradicts Tolkien's explicit statement that: "Though great evil had come after, even *the followers of Elendil* remembered with pride the coming of the great host of Ar-Pharazôn out of the deeps of the Sea; and on the highest hill of the headland above the Haven *they* had set a great white pillar as a monument (RotK: 327; my emphasis)." It is grammatically impossible that the "they" who set up the pillar were "the great host of Ar-Pharazôn," both for the obvious reason that "the followers of Elendil" is the subject of the sentence and because a professor of English would not have been so sloppy in his language to use a third-person plural verb for a singular subject.[6]

It might be objected that the followers of Elendil, who were themselves persecuted by Ar-Pharazôn, could not possibly conceive of raising a monument to his glory. Yet Tolkien explicitly recognizes this factor when he writes "*Though* great evil had come after, *even* the followers of Elendil remembered with pride the coming of the great host of Ar-Pharazôn out of the deeps of the Sea (*ibid;* my emphasis)." In any case, the accent falls less on the person of Ar-Pharazôn than on the defeat of Sauron by Númenor.

Why bother?

Why should we worry ourselves over such details? To begin with, one may have occasion to wonder at why so straightforward a passage from Tolkien need be convoluted or neglected by game designers who profess the Iron Crown slogan of meeting "the high standards associated with the Tolkien legacy." Of course, mere's nothing "high" about any of this: the monument wasn't a tower, it wasn't in the middle of Umbar's harbor, and Ar-Pharazôn didn't build it. Perhaps we would feel greater clemency if there were a welter of details about Umbar to juggle; but, in actuality, the hard facts we know about Umbar can be counted on the fingers of a single hand.

There is a more important reason why details about the monument matter. As we have attempted to make apparent through our interpretation of the passage, we believe that this pillar may in fact prove to be absolutely central for understanding the character of political relations between Umbar and Gondor throughout the Third Age, as well as for understanding how those relations were perceived and symbolized by the parties involved.[7]

Hyarmendacil's pillar: a reconstruction

Having established what can be known with certainty about the monument on the basis of Tolkien's references, we move on to the crucial step for game design: developing a plausible interpretation through the use of historical imagination. What follows is a reconstruction that focuses on the questions of when the pillar was raised and from where its crystal originated.

When Ar-Pharazôn came to Umbar to challenge the might of Sauron, he brought with him a globe of crystal upon which he purposed to constrain his opponent to swear an oath of fealty.[8] "For seven days he journeyed with banner and trumpet, and he came to a hill, and he went up and set there his pavilion and his throne; and he sat him down in the midst of the land.... Then he sent forth heralds, and he commanded Sauron to come before him and swear to him fealty (Sil: 270)." Ar-Pharazôn caused the crystal globe to be set in the ground before his throne.

Ar-Pharazôn's challenge to Sauron had been over the latter's claim to the title "King of Men," and in swearing fealty to the king of Númenor (however falsely), Sauron ceded to him that prerogative of rule. After Akallabêth, the fragile power of Umbar's Temple (which had become the institution that integrated the

form of slave-domination over the men of the Harad) began to crumble, and the weakened military power of the lords of Umbar led to rebellion among the Haradrim, who sought to reassert their independence from the Númenórean yoke.

The contradiction inherent in these "wars of liberation" was that the royal tradition of independence to which the Haradan leaders appealed was itself a creation of Númenórean patronage and hegemony. The Dúnedain had originally taught the men of Harad agriculture, forging technology, and administrative skills—all necessary ingredients for kingdoms—and then actually assisted the most powerful of the Haradrim to establish such kingdoms by integrating them into a tributary system.

The client-kings of Haradwaith received Númenórean military support for their royal claims over their own people, and they in turn saw to the collection of tribute for their foreign masters. "Independent" Haradan kingdoms could not exist without Númenórean power to back them up. Some kind of political-military arrangement therefore had to be established in the wake of the loss of Númenor itself. Oaths of alliance and protection were sworn between the lords of Umbar and the kings of Harad at the hill of the crystal, because of the awe in which it was held in the memory of both.

It was on the basis of these oaths that the lords of Umbar were able to maintain Haradan support against the Gondorian investment of Umbar by King Eärnil and his successors for over a century of protracted war. When Ciryaher utterly destroyed this alliance in 1050 and became Hyarmendacil, he had to co-opt the central symbol of that alliance in order to ensure that all future political relations would be controlled by Gondor. Therefore, he ordered the globe removed from its hill "in the midst of the land" and brought to Umbar, where he caused it to be set atop a pillar commemorating Sauron's (and, now, Haradwaith's) submission to Dúnadan power.

It was Hyarmendacil who resumed the Númenórean tradition of patronage towards the kingdoms of the Harad as a guarantee of tribute. This he did by holding the sons of these kings "hostage" in the court of Osgiliath, and by forcing their fathers to swear allegiance and friendship to the line of Anárion before the pillar. The tributary system of "homage" to Númenor was thereby re-established by recourse to a sacred relic of that system.

It was only later (around the year 1940), that Sauron's power over the Haradrim kingdoms had grown great enough to create new forms of internal political stability (probably cultically-based). Only then could the Haradan kings afford to destroy the old symbol of their legitimacy in Umbar, by assisting in its overthrow. It was this decisive act which led the kings of Gondor and Arnor to realize for the first time that "a single will and power sought the destruction of the survivors of Númenor."

Footnotes

1. To use these temporal markers for the purpose of dating the source document assumes that they are not later additions to an earlier source, which cannot ultimately be determined with certainty. Tolkien denotes "insertions of a later date" by the inclusion of brackets (RotK: 313). It is not entirely clear, however, whether these brackets refer to the condition of the sources themselves, or to their incorporation into "The Annals of the Kings and Rulers" by their Fourth Age compilers.

2. Tolkien writes: "In that war [Telumehtar's conquest of Umbar in 1810]…Umbar was again held for a while by the kings….But in the new evils that soon befell Gondor Umbar was again lost, and fell into the hands of the Men of the Harad (RotK: 329)." If the Men of the Harad are to be identified with the "servants" in our source passage, then "the new evils" of which the present text speaks would seem to refer to the Wainrider invasions of 1851-1944. I choose 1940 as the most likely candidate for the Haradan conquest of Umbar because of a rather interesting correspondence of events, which may well allude to the overthrow of the monument mentioned in our primary passage:

   It was in the reign of Araphant in the North and Ondoher son of Calimehtar in the South that the two kingdoms again took counsel together after long silence and estrangement. *For at last they perceived that some single power and will was directing assault from many quarters upon the survivors of Númenor.* It was at that time that Arvedui heir of Araphant wedded Fíriel daughter of Ondoher (1940). But neither kingdom was able to send help to the other; for Angmar renewed its attack upon Arthedain at the same time as the Wainriders reappeared in great force (RotK: 329; my emphasis).

   The realms-in-exile had been subject to hostility ever since their foundation, so the mere fact of coinciding assaults from enemies would not be sufficient to recognize the peculiar emphasis of this insight. Rather, something else must have happened in 1940 (or immediately before it) that triggered sudden recognition of the relationship between the *unity* of the attacks and their focus upon the Dúnedain precisely as *survivors of Númenor*. The casting down of the memorial of Sauron's humiliation by Númenor is the perfect occasion for such a realization.

3. One might have expected Elessar to have attempted to restore the downfallen monument if, as Tolkien states, it was viewed as a symbol of Sauron's defeat. Hence, if our source had come from after the War of the Ring, we would have expected some kind of reference to Elessar's "complete subdual" of Umbar (RotK: 327).

4. I would refer the reader to Richard E. Blackwelder's *Tolkien Thesaurus* (1990), which provides quick reference to the vocabulary patterns used by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*. On the non-relation of "pillar" and "setting up" to towers, see Pp. 176, 205, 245. It should be stated that comparative linguistic evidence from Tolkien's writings does not "prove" an argument of this sort either way, but it should drive home the point that the burden of plausibility falls rather with the person who would offer an interpretation of a passage from Tolkien which openly contradicts its literal sense.

5. Another very interesting question that Spielman neglects is the matter of where Eärnil obtained this (according to her estimate) nearly sixty-foot wide crystal globe, and the accompanying question of how he managed to get it there.

6. A brief examination of Tolkien's consistent grammatical distinction between the words "host" and "hosts" makes this point apparent (Blackwelder, 1990: 123).

7. A prime example of this would be the explanation of the origins and causes of the war that led to Umbar's conquest by Eärnil. All we really know about the self-understanding of the Ship-kings is that one of them commissioned the construction of a monument to Sauron's defeat sometime after Umbar was taken. The fact that the wife of Gondor's first Ship-king was a Black Númenórean (probably from Umbar) is a further clue that is rarely factored into evaluations of the war (cf. *OH* 3: 13-18).

8. This is conceived of as a direct parallel to the Stone of Erech, which Isildur had brought with him from Númenor and upon which the Oathbreakers gave their pledge of military alliance with the Dúnedain against Sauron:

   upon the top [of the hill] stood a black stone, round as a great globe, the height of a man, though its half was buried in the ground. Unearthly it looked, as though it had fallen from the sky, as some believed; but those who remembered still the lore of Westernesse told that it had been brought out of the ruin of Númenor and there set by Isildur at his landing (RotK: 62).

The Queen of Shadow: a Fourth Age campaign

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The character of Aelindur, daughter of Sauron, was created (without any RPG intentions) in 1989 by my friend Kathrin Vestergren. She had limited her story to the Second Age, being somewhat uncertain about what Isildur and Elrond would do with Sauron's daughter when she was discovered in the ruins of Mordor (perhaps sending her to Amon to stand trial before Manwë). I, on the other hand, suggested instead that Aelindur would go into hiding in the East without being identified by the Lords of the Free Peoples, only to return from exile in a later Age to avenge her father's defeat.

This possibility was touched upon briefly in part of my "Beyond the Third Age" article in Other Hands *1: 16-19. Here I offer a far more detailed description of Aelindur's plots and schemes, and of the general situation in northwestern Middle-earth in the 151st year of the Fourth Age. It is intended to serve as a starting-point for a series of adventures in these later turbulent years. The campaign would be interestingly open-ended, since the player-characters' actions would have great bearing on whether Aelindur succeeds in her fell plans or not (Why not make them feel the weight of the world's fate on their shoulders, just as Frodo did?).*

Jag sjöng en natt, en manskensnatt,	*I sang a night, a moonlit night*
om luftens hav i bans,	*of airy sea in dance*
jag sjöng om storm, som skapte sig	*I sang of storm which made itself*
till mina tankars lans.	*to my mental lance*
Från bortom måne, bortom sol	*From beyond moon, beyond sun*
kom kraften till mitt sinn':	*power came to my mind:*
på stranden invid Numens svall	*on the beach beside Numen's waves*
uppstod en svartkonstvind	*arouse a necromantic wind.*
Den blåste under stjärnorna	*It blew under the stars*
i Mordorslandets natt	*in Mordor's night*
till Barad-dûr på Gorgoroth,	*to Barad-dûr on Gorgoroth —*
ben svarta borgens vall,	*the black fortress wall*
där hopplös skugga ruvar tungt	*where despair's shadow broods heavily*
vart hårt och dystert år,	*each harsh and gloomy year —*
och yrde runtom tomens stål:	*and swept all around the steel towers:*
då dog allt hopp om vår.	*thus died all hope of spring.*

Northwestern Endor: FA 151

The reunited Kingdom of Gondor & Arnor possesses *de facto* hegemony over northwestern Endor. Formally, the sister realms possess the lands between the Ered Luin, Forochel, the Misty Mountains, Ephel Dúath, and Umbar (apart from the independent but allied state of Rohan and the semi-autonomous Shire). In practice, however, the King's authorities exercise very little control over the Dunnish tribes of Enedwaith and each harsh and gloomy and swept around the thus died all hope of Drúwaith Iaur and the natives of sparsely-populated Harondor.

Although united under the same monarch, Gondor and Arnor retain separate legislative, administrative, and military establishments. King Eldarion resides in Minas Tirith and has appointed his son and heir Eldacar to the position of Viceroy of Arnor at the rebuilt capital of Fornost Erain. Traditionally, the King travels north every summer to briefly sojourn in his northern lands.

Arnor

Arnor remains a sparsely populated land despite the King's encouragement of Gondorian colonization through advantageous taxation policies. Its population centers are Lake Evendim, and the Baranduin and Lhûn valleys. Its only major city is Fornost Erain, though there are serious plans to rebuild Tharbad, whose bridge has already been repaired as has the Greenway running from Fornost Erain to the Gap of Rohan. There is also a new fortress at Weathertop, built by the Dwarves of Moria some decades ago.

Gondor

Gondor has changed little since the War of the Ring. Ithilien is gradually being re-populated under Prince Boromir, son of Éowyn and Faramir, who rules his fief from the newly-built capital Ost-in-En-Ernil in the Emyn Amen. Imrahil's grand-daughter Wilwarin is Princess of Dol Amroth and fief-holder of Dor-en-Ernil. Her cousin Edrahil is Captain of the Knights of Belfalas. Minas Tirith's fortifications were repaired and strengthened by the Dwarves of Aglarond in early Fourth Age, and the city is now the most well-defended location in the region.

The city of Umbar and its rural surroundings are ruled by a governor (currently Prince Boromir's brother Beren) who is directly responsible to the King. The region has been slowly reintegrated into Gondor's territory, but King Eldarion believes it will take more time before it can be turned into a regular province of the realm. He is worried about secessionist strivings among its locals, since the leading citizens of Umbar, even without the interference of Sauron, clearly have other political priorities that Minas Tirith: Gondor looks to the northeast while Umbar looks to the south.

Rohan

The Riddermark has grown stronger over the past century due the demise of its surrounding foes in the War of the Ring, though the lifestyle of the riders has not changed (apart from a growing pride which occasionally takes chauvinistic appearances). The realm is currently ruled by the third King of the Third Line, the aged Elfhelm, son of Elfwinë. Outside the Hornburg, there is now a growing town which serves as a center for Westfold. The Dwarves of Aglarond have a thriving business in tools and weaponry, which they exchange for food and other supplies from the locals.

The Dunlendings

The Dunnish clans are the dominating Mannish group in the area between the Gwathló, the Misty Mountains, the White Mountains, and the Sea. Technically, they are subjects of the Winged Crown, and their chieftains have occasionally expressed words of loyalty to the King in Minas Tirith. In practice, they follow their own leaders and traditions. In secret, most harbor strong hatred towards the Dúnedain and the Rohirrim for denying them what they consider to be Dunnish rights. Gondor *de facto* only controls the Greenway, the rest of the region being the natives' turf, where unwary foreign travelers have sometimes disappeared without a trace.

Mordor

After the War of the Ring, King Elessar gave the land of Nurnen to its slaves. They established the Kingdom of Lithlad, a densely populated agricultural country. It is closely allied to Gondor, and the population has a strong pro-Dúnadan attitude in consequence of their recent liberation. Gorgoroth, however, is an abandoned wasteland. As far as everyone knows, Sauron's strongholds toppled when his power was broken, and Orodruin sleeps.

Rhovanion

The peoples of the upper Anduin vale, Eryn Lasgalen (formerly Mirkwood), the plains of Rhovanion, and Dorwinion have resumed many of their ancient contacts with Gondor. The disappearance of Dol Guldur's Shadow has opened the region for trade and growth, and the Northmen maintain their old friendship with Gondor.

Rhûn and Harad

Little has changed in the old realms of Rhûn and Harad. Their inhabitants view Gondor with mixed feelings and worry about the possibility of renewed Dúnadan domination, however benevolent it might be. Many of the realms have long traditions of fighting the Dúnedain and such cultural memories will linger for many centuries.

The Elven lands

The Elves of the Fourth Age show little concern for the affairs of Mortals, knowing that their power has waned with the departure of their mightiest Lords and the destruction of the One Ring. Elves dominate four regions during the early Fourth Age: Lórien (which includes the southern Eryn Lasgalen, or "East Lórien"), the northern Eryn Lasgalen, Lindon, and Rivendell.

Elladan is Prince of Lórien. His Silvan-populated realm encompasses the ruins of Dol Guldur, which is kept under tight surveillance.[1] King Thranduil continues to rule his northern woodland realm, which has suffered little change since the War of the Ring, save for a reduction in the number of giant spiders and other fell creatures in the area. Lindon, whose people maintain the Havens from which the Elves depart for Aman, is ruled by Círdan. Elrohir has assumed the position of Lord of Rivendell, which continues to serve as a refuge for the very few Noldor and Sindar that still dwell east of the Blue Mountains.

The Dwarven realms

Moria has been re-populated and is once again the most important Dwarven settlement in northwestern Middle-earth, and the Dwarves of the Blue Mountain dwindle in number as many migrate there. Aglarond has grown into a small but prosperous enclave, while the Lonely Mountain and Iron Hills retain their former importance.

The Servants of the Shadow

Sauron's downfall did not bring about the complete end of his servants. Orcs and Trolls survived in many places, especially in their mountain strongholds at Gundabad and elsewhere in the Hithaeglir. Since the War of the Ring, they have lacked a strong leader and have been reduced to squabbling among themselves, and therefore do not pose a major

threat to the Free Peoples. This, however, does not spell an end to the periodic Orkish raids upon the upper Anduin vale. There is talk of Dragons and other hideous creatures in the northern wastes, but they have so far proven mere rumors. But matters might not be so well.

The Dark Queen

In the Second Age, Sauron came to the Elves of Hollin as Annatar, Lord of the Gifts, claiming to be an emissary of the Valar. Many believed him, among them Celebrimbor's sister Ariel, whom Sauron seduced. Soon after his final departure from Eregion, she bore a daughter, Aelindur. Ariel died and the child was brought up by her uncle.

Many years later, when Sauron's armies seized Celebrimbor's smithy, Aelindur was captured and brought to Mordor, where she was given a mansion to dwell in by the shore of Nurnen. In its garden she cultivated evil herbs and studied Nature's lores. She fled to the East at Sauron's defeat at the end of the Second Age, and went into hiding. Over the centuries, Aelindur has become almost as evil as her father, if not as powerful.[2]

When Sauron fell in the War of the Ring, Aelindur saw an opportunity coming. The most powerful foes-Galadriel, Elrond and Gandalf-departed from Middle-earth. The only current serious opponents are the three remaining Istari, but of these only Radagast resides in northwestern Middle-earth, and his interest is mainly directed to the nature. Pallando and Alatar long since departed for eastern lands. Hence she would have no significant competitors, or at least so she thought.

Her dark dreams

Unlike her father, Aelindur possesses neither a state nor an army, but instead relies on her black arts and cunning to achieve her ambitions.[3] She intends to influence the thoughts and actions of individuals by fell means. She knows some very powerful mind-bending spells. Aelindur desires to throw Gondor into domestic chaos and then seize control over the remnants, using discontented Southron and Dúnadan noblemen as her primary tools.

When the Haradrim revolt under the leadership of her priests, many Gondorian nobles will turn against the King and civil war will ensue. The royal line will perish and many contenders will vie for the throne, causing much hardship for the realm. Aelindur intends to appear as Gondor's "savior," usurp the throne, and begin a long-lasting Dark reign.

Aelindur possesses the immortality and patience of the First-born, and resides in the ruins of the ancient Númenórean harbor of Lond Daer at the mouth of the Gwathló (a location chosen so that both Dunnish and Southron agents can reach it easily), pretending to be an eremetic Elf.[4]

From this dwelling place, Aelindur carefully prepares her schemes and ponders on reports from her trusted underlings. Occasionally, she has to travel to some important place, since there are vital actions that her henchmen are unable to perform. The most important ones being the application of her sorcerous will-breaking with which she can compell loyalty in mortals.[5]

Ideological strategies

Aelindur has clandestinely established a variant of Sauron's old Melkorian cult among Gondor's nobility. Its priests preach the coming of a Moon Princess, who will save the Dúnedain from their current decadent ways, reestablish their ancient Númenórean powers and might, with deathlessness for loyal followers.[6] Another variant of the cult is successfully preached among the Haradrim, speaking of opposing the Dúnedain and returning to Southron traditions.[7]

Military strategies

Rohan's *éoherë* is a serious problem for Aelindur, because it is the most powerful cavalry unit in northwestern Middle-earth and the Haradrim are unable to field a matching force. It must be neutralized or destroyed, and Aelindur pursues several strategies to achieve this. One is to develop a severe horse plague, a scheme which Aelindur would pursue from Lond Daer.[8] Another strategy is political: to entice the Dunlendings to once again strike at western Riddermark to regain their ancient possessions.[9]

Aelindur also tries to invent gun-powder weapons.[10] Saruman was working on it before he perished and Aelindur has learned of his ambitions when visiting the ruins of Isengard. She believes that muskets and guns will have good effects on battle formations and fortified positions, especially if they appear as a surprise. That research project is undertaken by some discontent Dwarves that have been recruited by the lure of wealth and power, who work in an abandoned settlement in southern Ered Luin.

Troubles in Arnor

While Arnor lacks the strength to successfully intervene in a Gondorian civil war,[11] Aelindur nevertheless seeks to divert the attention of any potential northern allies (including the Beornings of the uppermost Anduin vale and Thranduil). To this end, she has attempted to strengthen the Orcs of Mount Gundabad, in order to make them appear as significant a threat to deter Arnor's Viceroy from sending an army to the aid of Gondor. Aelindur has also sent agents to look for Dragons in the far north.[12]

Development and climax

The most challenging way to run this campaign would be to let the player-characters fight Aelindur's schemes, though initially not having the faintest idea what they are up against. The PCs should perhaps not belong to the crust of Gondor's political elite, but rather to its middle layer, some of them being noblemen. The following is an example how the campaign could be started.

There are strange rumors coming out of Harad. Prince Boromir sends a team of trusted underlings (the PCs) to Umbar to collect information from Governor Beren. When they reach the city Beren has just been murdered under mysterious circumstances, causing worries among the Dúnedain. The PCs start investigate the matters and finds clues of the Great Queen cult.

When they return to Ithilien and tell their story to their patron, they suddenly find that a lot of other noblemen are becoming cold or even hostile towards them. The PCs have acquired a number of seemingly unconnected political adversaries. This should be a bait for a continued investigation, which, though dogged with numerous obstacles, would lead to discovery of the Moon Princess cult in Gondor.

However, they are running short on time for Aelindur's plans are soon to materialize. Interestingly, the PCs initially do not know who their chief enemy is, nor does she know that the PCs are pursuing her. Whether they will find out about her before she learns of them depends entirely on how the adventures develop. Successful players might be able to nip Aelindur's plans in the

bud, while less fortunate ones would end up fighting in the civil war.[13] Aelindur hopes that her plans will materialize approximately as follows below:

The returning helper theme (cf. *OH* 4: 17-18)

In *Other Hands* 4, Gerrit Nuckton discussed the recurrent "return from exile" theme in Tolkien's works, briefly commenting on its application to this campaign. With reference to my original treatment of Aelindur, he suggests that one of the heroes of Arda's past Ages, such as Elrond, Galadriel, or Gandalf, might surprisingly return to Middle-earth to assist the Free Peoples in their struggle against the Dark Queen.[14] Personally, I would suggest that either Elrond or Radagast are selected as helpers, or that the gamemaster introduce an entirely new NPC of his own design.

Radagast seems to have played a fairly small role during the Third Age, and it may well be that he is some kind of surprise kept hidden by the Valar. Consider the following: Sauron was associated with the element of fire and so was Gandalf, the Wizard that eventually became his chief adversary. Both Radagast and Aelindur are associated with the forces of nature and the element of earth.

Elrond is another good choice since there is plenty on him in *The Lord of the Rings.* He is familiar to the players and it is easy for the gamemaster to role-play him. However, he is less powerful now when Nenya has lost its power. Elrond is associated with the element of water and the gamemaster can easily modify parts of the description of Aelindur above to change her affiliation to that element, too. The returning helper should act as Gandalf did during the Third Age: as an adviser with no intention to compel his allies. It is still the responsibility of the peoples of the Fourth Age to defeat their foe.

1. The Southrons revolt and massacre all Gondorians they find. The local Gondorian garrisons are in serious trouble.
2. King Eldarion orders the mobilizing of an army near Pelargir to deal with the Harad troubles. Rohan is asked to provide help.
3. As King Elfhelm assembles an *éoherë* at Edoras to send to Gondor, the horse plague strikes the camp and kills most of Rohan's war-horses.
4. As Gondor's noblemen mobilize their levies to send them to Pelargir, many of them rebel and instead make war upon the King. Some seize important fortifications by stratagem. A new Kin-strife has begun. (The rebels may also suddenly possess a lot of new-fangled weapons never seen before in Gondor.)
5. The whole royal family (preferably including Prince Eldacar in Fornost Erain), is murdered. There is no clear successor to the throne-the perfect cause for a long civil war.
6. The Dunlendings attack Rohan. (That does not require much incitement when they hear of the Forgoil's horses dying.)
7. The Orcs of Mount Gundabad attack eastern Arnor to prevent an intervention in the conflict. (Alternately, a Dragon strikes Fornost Erain.)
8. Chaos ensues. Aelindur simply waits for an opportune moment to step forth and take command, using the armed might of ensnared noblemen to suppress discontent.

Footnotes

1. Men are not welcome to visit Dol Guldur, since Elladan fears that there may be Sauronic secrets still hidden below the rubble.

2.Since she is part Noldo, she is bound to her physical body.

3. She has greater knowledge of and talent with of magic than any Elf (save perhaps Lúthien, another Maia-Noldo child).

4. She radiates so much power that she cannot pretend to be a mere mortal. She has hidden most of her abode very well and seemingly lives in a modest cottage. Unlike most of Sauron's servants, she docs not fear the ocean (Perhaps Ulmo no longer interferes with the events of Middle-earth.). She knows how to sail and she has gone to many places by sea.

5. The gamemaster can use another literary source as inspiration when preparing this campaign: the Mule in Isaac Asimov original *Foundation* trilogy is to a some extent comparable to Aelindur and certain of his methods and talents can easily be moved to Middle-earth.
6. Their message is fundamentally the ideology and dreams of the King's Men of Númenor seven thousand years ago. Aelindur has not forgotten how effectively her father used those ideas to topple the then mightiest realm in the known world.
7. Eventually, the Southrons would "break the shackles of the Northmen under the leadership of the freedom-giving Great Queen" and retake what was lost one and a half century ago.
8. Aelindur is well-versed in animal and plant lore, and knows some of the secrets behind the Great Plague that the 1630's of the Third Age devastated much of Middle-earth, so she will probably not have to work for before finding what she wants.
9. Aelindur uses the same methods that Saruman once did: political machinations and propaganda to ignite the Dunlendings' ancient hatred for "the Strawheads."
10. This idea may feel too modern to suit many gamemasters' and players' conception of Middle-earth. It is not important for the plot so feel free to remove it.
11. Both because of its small population and the hostility of the Dunlendings.
12. If she could establish contact with such a beast, she might persuade it to strike Fornost Erain at an opportune moment and create a grand diversion for her.
13. The shrewd Aelindur might actually feed the PCs false information to divert them from the right track and turn them into her unwitting tools.
14. This idea is good and can certainly be used the gamemaster; however, one should consider some limitations mentioned in the primary sources. Gandalf states clearly that his mission has been completed by Sauron's downfall and acts accordingly. Galadriel is pardoned by the Valar for whatever she did during the Flight of the Noldor in the First Age and is permitted to return to Valinor. Hence, it seems unlikely that she once again would go to Middle-earth.

CALL FOR REVIEWS!!!

We would like to have our readers submit reviews of the *2nd edition MERP* rules, as well as for the *Arnor* realm module (which should be out well before our next issue). Also, it would be good if someone could write up a review of *Morgoth's Ring*, the latest installment in the "History of Middle-earth" series, because it contains materials (particularly from Part V "Myths Transformed") which will have significant implications for how we understand Tolkien's world in a gaming context So start writing!

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